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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 050327

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - LEBANON

¶1. This Travel Warning updates information on security threats and ongoing political violence in Lebanon, and informs U.S. citizens of current safety and security concerns. The Department of State urges that Americans avoid all travel to Lebanon and that American citizens in Lebanon consider carefully the risks of remaining. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Lebanon issued on April 21, 2008.

¶2. Violence broke out on May 7, 2008 in the capital, Beirut, when Hizballah militants blocked the road leading to Rafiq Hariri International Airport. As of May 12, 2008, the airport remains inaccessible.

¶3. There have been reports that Hizballah fighters continue to push into areas of Lebanon where they have not traditionally been prevalent. In addition to the violence provoked by these incursions, the U.S. remains concerned about the threat of terrorist attacks against Western interests in Lebanon. Groups such as Al-Qaeda and Jund al-Sham are present in the country and have issued statements calling for attacks against Western interests in the past.

¶4. The U.S. Embassy has suspended non-immigrant visa services as of Monday, May 12, 2008. Normal visa services are expected to resume when conditions improve. The Embassy continues to provide emergency and routine American citizens services.

¶5. Currently the American Embassy advises American citizens present in Lebanon to ensure they have an adequate supply of food, water and other essential items and to remain safely inside their homes. Americans are encouraged to review their travel plans following resumption of normal air services.

¶6. Current options for exit from Lebanon include:

Exit by land to Syria. - Overland routes to Syrian border crossings are open intermittently. Those traveling by land to Syria technically need a Syrian visa issued in

Washington. Syrian officials have been issuing visas to Americans at the border; however, Americans have reported that they have had to wait for between five and eight hours in order to be cleared for departure.

Exit by sea to Cyprus. - There are currently no ferry services to Cyprus. The only sea route available has been via private boat rental. The cost of a private yacht for passage to Cyprus is expensive. Americans seriously interested in this option should identify like-minded people and pool their resources.

¶7. Landmines and unexploded ordnance continually pose significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of the country where civil war fighting was intense. More than a dozen civilians have been killed and over 100 injured by unexploded ordnance following the armed conflict in July-August 2006. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

¶8. U.S. citizens traveling to Lebanon or resident in Lebanon should be aware that the U.S. Embassy has limited ability to reach all areas of Lebanon. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees can render assistance to U.S. citizens in areas where there is limited government control.

¶9. United States citizens are responsible for arranging commercial or private means of transportation to depart Lebanon. For Americans, individual or small-group travel out of the country remains the safest option. U.S. Government-facilitated evacuations such as took place in 2006 occur only when no safe private alternatives exist. Evacuation would be provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S.

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government for the cost of the travel. The lack of valid travel documents (U.S. passport or U.S. visa, as appropriate) will slow the U.S. embassy's ability to provide assistance. Further information on the department's role during emergencies is provided at [http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies\\_1212.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html).

¶10. The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State.

¶11. The Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; however, American citizens who require emergency services outside of these hours may contact the embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209. American citizens may register with the embassy online by visiting <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. Information on consular services and registration can also be found at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov> or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday local time.

¶12. Updated information on travel and security in Lebanon may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶13. Minimize considered.  
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